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ABSTRACT

Today, in an era of taxpayer revolts, lack of clarity in values, and changing family structure, children need advocates in the political arena as well as in the schools. This pamphlet suggests that administrators are in an excellent position to defend the rights of children on all fronts. It focuses on what administrators have done and specific things they can do to champion the causes of children and youth--who are often forgotten in the political process. (Author/LD)

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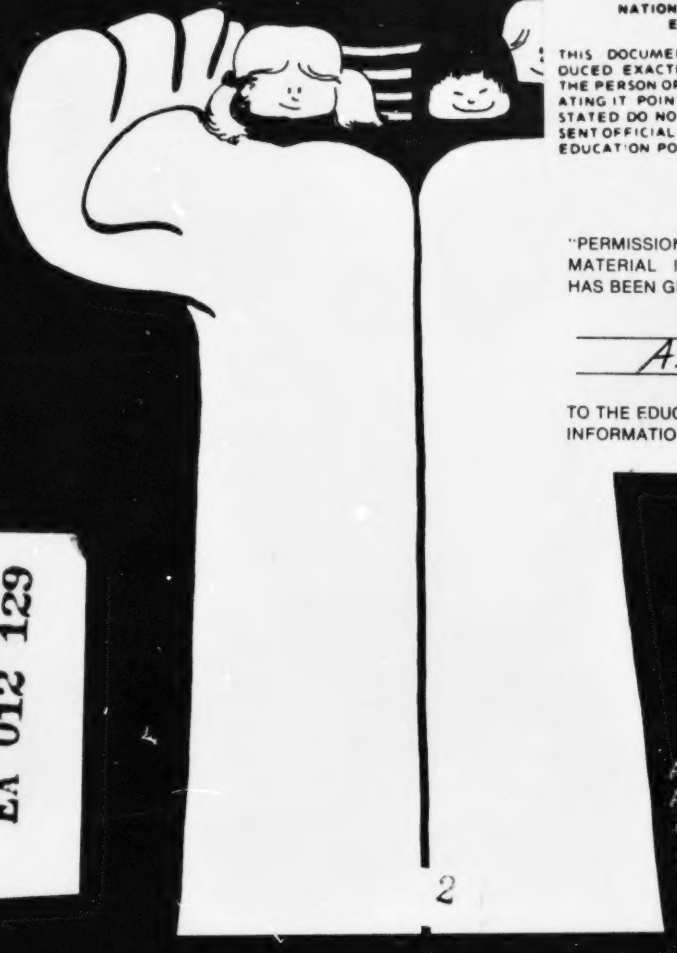
Champions of Children



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American Association of School Administrators

Administrators . . .

Champions of Children

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AASA Advisory Commission on Advocacy for
Children and Youth

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Contents

Foreword v

Introduction vii

Chapter One
What Are We About? 1

Chapter Two
How We Got Here 5

Chapter Three
Who Speaks For Children? 10

Chapter Four
Models To Emulate 13

Chapter Five
What Can You Do? 21

Commission Recommendations 23

Foreword

Champions of Children is a call to arms—a battle cry to administrators to fight for the rights of children as human beings, as citizens and as learners.

Historically, many leaders, including school administrators, have fought for and won significant reforms for youth. These include universal public schooling, child labor laws and programs for the disadvantaged.

Today, in an era of taxpayer revolts, lack of clarity in values and changing family structure, children urgently need advocates in the political arena as well as in the schools.

Administrators are in an excellent position to defend the rights of children on all fronts. Moreover, as the AASA child advocacy commission found, placing the rights of children before budgets, buildings and bargaining may serve to clarify the purpose of administration itself.

It is our wish at AASA that ***Champions of Children*** will provide examples and suggestions administrators can use to defend the talent and initiative of our nation's greatest resource—children and youth.

Paul B. Salmon, Ed.D.
Executive Director
AASA

Introduction

The 1976 Delegate Assembly of the American Association of School Administrators unanimously adopted a resolution stating:

> **ADVOCACY FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH**
> AASA believes that during these times of divisiveness in the educational community, and at a time when there is a lack of clarity in our nation's value system, the AASA and individual school administrators must, with vigor, re-assert their historic roles as advocates for children and youth. AASA urges all administrators to constantly advocate, at the bargaining table, in the halls of government, and in each community, the current and future needs of our children and youth. AASA further believes that there is no more fitting way to commemorate our nation's Bicentennial and to guarantee an ever-improving free society than through the valuing and nurturing of its youngest citizens.

AASA President Frank Dick appointed a Commission to develop action programs to achieve the purpose of the resolution. I was privileged to serve as chairperson for the Commission. It has been a most rewarding experience, both professionally and personally. I have been afforded an opportunity to learn so much. The Commissioners, Anne Campbell, Luvern Cunningham, Steve Knezevich, Deborah Wolfe and AASA liaison, Bill Henry, have been great mentors. I shall always be grateful to each of them.

The resolution was approved in 1976. Now, three years later, nothing has changed for the better. There is still divisiveness; there is still a lack of clarity in values. Perhaps an in-depth comparative look at then and now would reveal that the plight of children and youth has worsened. That look would reveal—

- the dramatically changing family structure in our society.
- the retreat from integrated education and from affirmative action which have been the paths toward a goal of "one nation, undivided."
- the "taxpayers revolt" which has fallen unevenly upon public education and, thus, on our children and youth.
- the grossly disproportionate share of unemployment borne by our urban, predominately minority, youth.

- the Juvenile Justice System which causes "status offenders" to languish in jail while felonious youth are freed.

The list could go on and on (other conditions affecting children and youth are cited in the text) and the longer it becomes the more urgent it is for me, for all of us to be Champions of Children.

That is what this report is about—the school administrators as advocates for children and youth. We defined that role as *advocates for children and youth as human beings, as citizens, and as learners.* It is a comprehensive definition that encourages administrators to advocate for children and youth whenever and wherever a champion is needed.

The Commission debated long and hard about many issues, roles, territories, behaviors. We were able to delineate and assign responsibilities to colleges and universities, to the American Association of School Administrators, and to the National Academy for School Executives. All of those are trainers and enablers. The measure of whether our children truly have champions rests primarily with State Departments of Education and especially with local school administrators. Consequently, that is the principal focus of this report—what administrators have done; what can be done.

Administrators' Role

We think it is critically important for educators to become involved in public policy. Administrators are too often faced with formulating educational policy to implement an ill-conceived public policy. We feel that school administrators must vigilantly fight for equality for all. The children who are hungry, ill, lame, or poor will not have equality with the well-nourished, the healthy, the swift, and the rich without our constant monitoring and advocacy. We believe that as long as children are separated by race and ethnicity, they (all children) lose the opportunity to share a uniquely American richness and our nation postpones, to another time, becoming one nation. We also know that wherever there are children who are capable of learning and don't, then those children have suffered a life-long injury. Rules and roles for advocacy? Simple. Do it!

How will we know that advocacy makes a difference? It is my personal and professional belief that the American people will once again renew their faith in public education and again assign to it a high priority in our nation's value system. The public needs to know a different dimension of who we are. We are now seen as managers of budgets, buildings, bargaining and bureaucracies. How much healthier it will be for our images, for public education, for children and youth when the dimension of Champions of Children is revealed.

Recently I had one of those rare but delightful Saturday mornings when there was no hurry to do anything. As I lingered over the umpteenth cup of coffee, I thoroughly exhausted the morning

paper including those usually inane fillers that publishers use. One, however, I found extremely interesting. It was about a man who was cleaning out his attic or cellar and came upon a claim check for a shoe repair. It was seven years old. Since the shoe repair shop was still in its same location, he thought he would have some fun by presenting a seven year-old claim check. He went to the cobbler and asked if by chance his shoes were still there. The cobbler went to the rear of the shop, looked, and returned to report that the shoes were indeed there. The man was pleasantly surprised and said, "Hey, that's great! I'll take them now." The cobbler said, "They will be ready next Tuesday."

It served as a reminder to me and perhaps one we all need. The children who could present a 200 year-old claim check for the rights of citizenship and we have said, "It will be ready next Tuesday." The black child who can present a 25 year-old claim check for equality of educational opportunity and we have said, "It will be ready next Tuesday." The child who can present a claim check of undeterminable age for being respected as a human being and we have said, "It will be ready next Tuesday." The girls who can present a claim check pre-dating Susan B. Anthony for equality and an end to stereotyping and we have said, "It will be ready next Tuesday."

Next Tuesday is here and it is embodied in the school administrator who is the Champion of Children—all children.

What can you do? The final chapter in this report has a shopping list of "can do" activities. It is not an exhaustive list. What we of the Commission urge each of you to do is select at least one activity and champion it. Do it with such completeness and courage that everyone —the community, parents, teachers, but especially children and youth —identifies you as an advocate. So many of the support systems for children have diminished in effectiveness that children need us now more than ever before.

If I were a child (and know what I know now) I would ask for your support in the following manner, "You know from your readings there is numerous research that there is a self-fulfilling prophecy. Your expectations for me greatly affect my performance. So I beg of you not to look at my economic status, nor at my clothes, nor at my ethnicity, nor at my sex, and expect anything less for me. I am your brother. I am you. I am as John Donne said, '. . . a piece of the continent, a part of the main . . .' and when you diminish me you diminish yourself. Expect no less for me than for your brother or yourself. I have the wonderful capacity to be what you expect me to be. I need you. Be my champion. Expect a lot of me. I will not disappoint you."

James M. Reusswig
Chairman
Commission on Advocacy for
Children and Youth

CHAPTER ONE

What Are We About?

Children need advocates.

While most parents, teachers and others responsible for the growth and development of children share common concerns as well as legal obligations, a variety of pressures often prevent them from keeping the needs of children and youth foremost among their priorities.

Parents and community leaders, including the clergy, have become increasingly dependent on the schools to perform this task.

But many teachers often give precedence to their concerns about salaries and fringe benefits.

Local school board members are caught up in exhaustive exercises in collective bargaining and frustrating deliberations about allocating limited resources.

And school administrators frequently have been forced to emphasize the effective and efficient management of a "system."

Who, then, speaks for children and youth?

Well, there are a number of single-purpose advocacy groups that are concerned exclusively with the needs of certain kinds of children —the disadvantaged, handicapped, non-English speaking or gifted, for example. The success of such groups is reflected in a spate of recent court decisions and new federal and state laws requiring that these children receive special services.

But who speaks for *all* children?

In 1976, members of the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) adopted a resolution saying "that during these times of divisiveness in the educational community, and at a time when there is a lack of clarity in our nation's value system, the AASA and individual school administrators must, with vigor, re-assert their historic roles as advocates for children and youth."

The resolution was drafted and introduced at the annual AASA convention by James M. Reusswig, superintendent of the Vallejo City Unified School District in California.

He had been inspired to do so for two reasons. First, he believes that children and youth more than ever before need advocates and "there is no one more strategically positioned than we school administrators to fill that societal void."

His second reason was frustration. "It was my perception about myself and about all of you," he told his AASA colleagues, "that during the past five years we have really much improved our management skills and yet we have not gained any added respect or esteem or recognition for our considerable achievements."

He concluded that the reason for this lack of proper recognition is that school administrators lack a declared purpose for what they are managing. At gatherings of school administrators he heard incessant talk about issues such as collective bargaining, budgets, buses, bonds and buildings. In addition, there were many "how to" sessions on the tools of effective management—participatory management, management by objectives, conflict resolution, effective communications and so forth. And while neither the issues nor the tools were unimportant, they seemed to Reusswig to be without purpose.

WHY THIS REPORT?

- To help school administrators become recommitted to their basic mission—serving as advocates for children and youth
- To help the public better understand and appreciate the role of school administrators in our society
- And to help children and youth gain a clearer understanding and appreciation of what schools are for, what schools can do for them.

As he interviewed candidates for administrative positions, he asked, "What is the purpose of education?" The responses indicated that most candidates had given little serious thought to the question.

And so, in Reusswig's mind, two needs converged: the need for school administrators to have a purpose and the need of children for advocates.

Who Are The Children?

They come from your community and all communities. They live in abundance and squalor. They come from two-parent homes, single-parent homes and homes of all kinds. They come from homes where they are loved and from homes where they are abused. They come triumphant and they come defeated. They come hoping and despairing, happy and angry.

They are from all economic groups. They are white, black, hispanic, native American and dozens of other racial and ethnic groups. They are short and tall, fat and thin, swift and lame. They are gifted and retarded. They range in age from a few years to the late teens.

Most of them have one thing in common: they come to school. They come because they want to or because they have to. They come with great expectations or none at all. They attend regularly, occasionally or only sporadically.

They are people . . . citizens . . . learners.

They are the richness of their community, their state, this nation and of the world. If it weren't for them there really wouldn't be much purpose to life; certainly there would be no need to have schools, teachers and administrators.

Because they usually cannot speak effectively for themselves, they need advocates.

A Role For Administrators

Advocacy styles and perceptions vary. Some school administrators work best as part of an administrative team. Others are more effective when they work independently. Some clearly are talented in bringing diverse groups together; others work better behind the scenes as planners and facilitators. Some function best in a highly structured setting, others with more freedom. Some have a conceptual approach to school administration, some a more mechanical approach. Some want to manage a district by predetermined plan while others encourage planning at each school site.

Stuart E. Gothold, chief deputy superintendent of Los Angeles County schools, believes administrators can be advocates of children and youth in one of two ways, either in physical proximity to children or "in moral proximity to the issues that dramatically affect kids."

The "greatest advocacy role of all," according to Lee McMurrin, superintendent of schools in Milwaukee, is "seeking to improve the quality of education."

Don P. Sheldon, superintendent of schools in Walled Lake, Michigan, believes "there may be forces at play in the public schools today which are potentially more damaging to our youth because of their invidious nature than is the physical and mental torment inflicted upon children by misguiding or uncaring parents. . . . I am alluding to rules, regulations, policies and, most important of all, practices which may well harbor great potential for the violation of human rights."

And the principal of a large elementary school in northern Ohio notes that as adults seem to care less about children, "their disrespect and misbehavior is compounded. . . . My most satisfying work has been to deal with children in small groups, and see them grow to accept and respect their peers in a friendly and positive manner."

Jim Reusswig observes that "as our society becomes more and more complex, it unknowingly infringes more and more upon the freedoms of its people. It places hurdles through laws, rules, regulations. Some of the efforts to create equality produce conformity. And the process of growing up unique becomes even more difficult."

To "make it" successfully as adults, says Reusswig, children and youth "need more than your and my quiet assistance. They need strong advocates. . . ."

CHAPTER TWO

How We Got Here

Contrary to conventional wisdom, the history of childhood in America is not an idyllic saga. Those who championed the cause of children waged an uphill battle, and none were more often on the firing line than those committed to universal public schooling.

In colonial America, infant mortality was high; parents were ignorant about how to maintain their children's physical health, for pediatrics was unknown until almost 1900. The concept of original sin prevailed: Children were regarded as naturally wicked. It was commonly believed that they required strict discipline and frequent punishment if they were to be properly trained to deal with the harsh realities of the adult world. The power of parents was absolute and most progeny that survived childhood diseases were put to work as soon as possible to enhance the economic status of the family. What was considered "childhood" encompassed a shorter period of years than is the case today and the concept of adolescence was not known.

Schools were considered to be but one of many educational institutions, and not often the most important. Families, churches, communities and apprenticeships exerted an equal or greater influence in developing children into adults.

At the time of the Revolution, schools in America served to maintain the kind of class distinctions that were then characteristic of European countries. Most had a decided religious bias. They were operated either by churches or by colonial governments that reflected the views of a particular religion. Generally, schooling was designed to serve the interests of an established church. Literacy was important primarily because it made it possible for people to read and learn from the Bible; the teacher and the minister often was the same person.

Post-Revolutionary Era

When the U.S. Constitution was drafted, education was not considered essential enough to be included among the basic rights of the people. By omission, it was reserved under the Bill of Rights as a state function. And so it remains to this day.

Within a few years after ratification of the Constitution, a growing awareness began to spread throughout the fledgling American republic that a government based on the consent of those being governed required a knowledgeable citizenry. The people needed to know and understand enough to make it possible for their experiment in representative democracy to function effectively.

President George Washington recognized this emerging need in his famous Farewell Address. He urged the American people to promote "institutions for the general diffusion of knowledge," for he believed it essential that "public opinion be enlightened."

Any nation that expects to be both ignorant and free "expects what never was and will never be," said Thomas Jefferson. And James Madison said, "A people who mean to be their own governors must arm themselves with the power which knowledge gives."

And so, perhaps with more faith than foresight, there was created the concept of the common school, a place where all children would receive a common education and learn to share common convictions and commitments. A school, in short, where children would learn enough to become effective citizens of the new republic.

Fortunately there was a base upon which to build. The more or less publicly supported religion-oriented schools of the colonial period had been augmented by a growing number of private schools and academies operated for charity or profit. And seven of the first 14 states had enacted constitutions that supported at least the concept of public education. At first, these provisions were more often cited in rhetoric than adhered to in reality. But the seeds planted by Washington, Jefferson and Madison were soon to bear fruit.

Common School Crusade

In the absence of a federal constitutional mandate, Horace Mann and others who believed that the young nation needed a system of common schools found it necessary to proceed on a state-by-state basis. They also discovered that widespread recognition of the need to provide education for citizenship wasn't sufficient to generate the necessary political support in any state. Only by concentrating on politics rather than pedagogy was it possible to forge the coalitions of unlikely allies that made possible between 1825 and 1875 the creation of public education systems similar in structure to those of today—that is, systems providing tax-supported common schooling without cost to students.

Those who led the crusade to replace educational *laissez-faire* with a system of common schools blatantly appealed to the selfish

interests of divergent groups. To a business community in the early years of a new industrial revolution, they stressed the value of public schooling in maintaining social order. To those caught up in the growing movement toward mass participation in public affairs, they emphasized the value of universal schooling in breaking down a rigid class structure. To all, they preached the role of common schools in achieving national cohesion.

What these politically astute common school crusaders succeeded in creating was the embryo of a public school network that could be taken over and administered by a new breed of professional—educators who dedicated their lives to the maintenance and expansion of a systematic means of improving the way children made the transition to adulthood.

Professionalism Supreme

The salient feature of public schooling in America between about 1875 and 1925 was the leadership of professional administrators in consolidation and systemization. It was an impressive yet inadvertently flawed achievement—impressive because within a 50-year span public schooling was transformed from an uncoordinated scattering of small, often corrupt and frequently inefficient village districts into a series of larger systems organized on an industrial model; flawed because the "one best system" turned out to be excessively bureaucratic and often slow in responding to the changing needs of children.

The nation was in the midst of an unprecedented period of industrialization and urbanization. The nature of society was changing dramatically. Restrictive puritan attitudes toward life had given way to more optimistic views, and these were now being further tempered by the spirit of a new scientific age.

However, the hallmarks of the "one best system" of public schooling were centralization and standardization—unity and uniformity. The result was rigid, lock-step instruction that dealt with children *en masse* rather than as individuals. They had to sit just so at their desks, to stand and recite like robots in response to a teacher's orders. Corporal punishment was routine; learning was indeed imparted "to the tune of a hickory stick." Seventy-four prominent educators agreed in a policy statement that schools should stress punctuality, regularity, attention and silence "as habits that are necessary in an industrial and commercial civilization."

But children who could attend schools were the lucky ones. In large measure, the success of industrialization in America was due to the profits made possible by the extensive use of inexpensive child labor. Throughout the country, the children of the poor routinely received at best only a few years of assembly line public schooling and then went to work—in textile mills, mines and factories. A law to control child labor was not passed by the Congress until 1916, and

then it was found unconstitutional on a 5-4 vote of the U.S. Supreme Court. The nation outlawed alcoholic beverages but continued to consider the economic exploitation of children as both ethical and necessary.

A system for educating the masses had been created, but only a portion of the masses was able to take full advantage of it. The public school system served as a social and economic selection agency. While most children were able to enter the system at the bottom, those deemed incapable or troublesome—or whose parents needed additional family income—soon dropped or were pushed out to join the ranks of a large unskilled labor force. The more capable or affluent went on to high school; only the most intelligent or well-to-do entered universities. But changes were brewing—changes in attitudes toward children and in theories about how children learn.

Modernization

Two themes have marked the past half century of public schooling. The first is a growing realization that children are people, and deserve to be treated as individuals, not as cogs in some giant machine. The other is that schools have continually assumed increasing responsibilities and are now more essential to the nation than ever before. While the roots of both these themes reach back to the turn of the century, they didn't begin to have an impact on schools until more recent years.

The scientific age produced a new breed of child development specialist. Their findings fueled a variety of forces that eventually coalesced to change public attitudes toward children. Abraham Jacobi founded modern pediatrics. G. Stanley Hall created the concept of adolescence. And John Dewey developed a child-centered theory of learning.

The movement against child labor gathered momentum. A federal Children's Bureau was established. Efforts to humanize schools were initiated. A growing middle class, the product of industrialization, perceived the emancipation of children as essential to their upward mobility. This was the segment of American society that found new ideas about child care and life-adjustment schooling most appealing. Inevitably, controversies arose between those who wanted schools to shape the child to meet the needs of society and those who were attracted by new ideas about the physical, intellectual and psychological development of children. As a result, only very slowly did change permeate the society and its schools.

By the 1930s it was finally possible to enact a federal ban on child labor and begin effective enforcement of long-standing compulsory attendance laws.

Meanwhile, new demands were being made of the schools—training in technical skills during two world wars, keeping youth off the labor market since the Depression, schooling for scientific

supremacy in the wake of Sputnik and, more recently, compensating for the ravages of poverty and the stigma of racial discrimination.

Whereas 50 years ago schools deliberately weeded out certain kinds of students as they progressed up the academic ladder, schools today are expected to provide all students with equal opportunities to gain as much schooling as possible—to go out of their way to help every child achieve his or her potential, and perhaps a little more.

School administrators, once advocates for a system, must now become advocates for children and youth.

CHAPTER THREE

Who Speaks For Children?

In response to the changing needs and demands of the society it serves, the American public school gradually has assumed greater responsibility for transforming children into adults. As a result, schools today are more important than ever—to children, to their parents and to the nation.

Parents have become more dependent on outside forces in helping them raise their children. They are no longer expected or required to cure a child's fever without outside assistance, for example, or train their children in job skills. Children, once regarded as economic necessities, have become financial liabilities; they are dependents rather than contributors. Parents today have children despite their cost.

Quantum changes in the nature of American society, particularly in family life, have resulted in schools being expected to serve students with experiences that differ significantly from those of children only a generation ago. Consider a few specifics:

Smaller families. Women are now having their first child later in life, are spacing children closer together and having fewer of them. This means the average student today has fewer brothers and sisters with whom to relate. At the same time, there has been a general decline in the number of "extended" families—those that include additional family members such as grandparents in the same household.

More working mothers. A majority of mothers are now part of the nation's workforce. They no longer are home during the day. Millions of children now go home from school to a house or home without an adult present.

More single-parent families. An estimated 40 percent of all school-age children now spend at least part of their childhood in a home with only one parent, usually a working mother. Such children have curricular and counseling needs that differ from those of students with two parents.

More pre-school experiences. An estimated 50 percent of all pre-school-age children now spend some time in some kind of institutionalized setting—child care center, nursery school, etc.

Less reliance on community. Increasing urbanization and family mobility have contributed to the depersonalization of society and lessened community coherence. A growing affinity for distant entertainment options such as boating, skiing and camping means less involvement in community recreation activities.

Impact of television and other mass media. The influence of television on children today cannot be underestimated. By the age of 18, the average person has spent more time viewing television than attending school—or being with his or her parents. In addition, the quality of the mass media—of television, literature, music and films—that are so readily available to youth today differ considerably from the standards of only a generation ago.

Protecting Children's Rights

The legal status of children has improved dramatically in recent years. A new body of law increasingly views children both as citizens, with basic constitutional rights, and as individuals who, because they are immature, require special protections and constraints. Children not only have the right to be treated with fairness and justice, like everyone else, but because of their youth they also have certain special rights based on their physical and psychological needs—the right to an adequate diet, proper medical care and physical security, for example.

However, many children in America are being denied some or all of their new-found rights. An estimated 10 million children under the age of 16 receive no medical attention, for example. Nearly two million school-age children are not enrolled in the nation's schools. One million children a year are the victims of child abuse. And about eight million children go to school hungry every morning, even though legislation now on the books permits schools to feed them at minimal cost.

Perhaps as a consequence of the collective influence of all previously cited factors, the nation has a disproportionate number of severely depressed young people, many of whom seem bent on self-destruction through alcohol, drugs, pre-marital sex and even suicide.

Who speaks for all these children?

What Are Schools For?

Over the past 200 years few institutions in America have been subjected to greater enlargement of popular expectations and demands than the public school. At first it was education for citizenship and national unity. Then were added the not always compatible goals of domesticating the masses, training semiskilled workers and providing the key to upward mobility. More recently the focus has been on individual growth and development and the eradication of poverty and discrimination.

For all their flaws and their critics—and there has never been a shortage of either—schools generally must have responded well or they wouldn't have been called upon continually to assume additional political, social and economic responsibilities.

Obviously public schooling has succeeded in providing a diverse population with social and political cohesion. And it has provided upward mobility—just compare the diversity of leadership in the nation today to the limited sources of such leadership in the past.

Even the widely criticized educational efforts of the War on Poverty more than 10 years ago are beginning to pay off. Between 1965 and 1976 the enrollment of blacks in colleges and universities almost quadrupled; and the improving quality of black education is responsible for dramatic gains in wage equality with whites.

The value of education has sometimes been oversold. Schools alone cannot transform society. But to the extent that schools succeed in providing all children with equal opportunities to achieve their individual potentials, the results eventually will be reflected throughout society; to the extent that they fail, the longer will social and economic inequities continue to exist.

CHAPTER FOUR

Models To Emulate

School administrators develop personal styles of child advocacy. Some focus their efforts on individual children and the food, shelter, guidance or assistance they need immediately. Others prefer advocacy that will have an impact on their community or state; they seek opportunities to encourage community awareness of its youth and foster concerns for their welfare. Some support legislative efforts that promise long-term benefits for children. And other administrators find ways students can participate in making decisions that affect them.

The key to advocacy is caring. It is caring enough to take action against abusive parents. It is having the courage to consider children's needs first—before those of teachers, secretaries or other school personnel. It is caring enough to stand up for the rights of students when staff and community are pressuring you to do otherwise.

Advocacy by "Adoption"

At Carter G. Woodson Junior High School in New Orleans, for example, caring took on a new dimension when the staff began its own version of child advocacy. They called the program "Adopt" since each faculty or staff member "adopted" one or more students for the school year.

"Adopt" was initiated after a close look at student suspensions at Woodson. There had been 392 suspensions in a student body of 1,270 during one recent period. Moreover, 76 students had dropped out of school; student antagonism was at an all-time high.

Students initially selected for "adoption" were selected from among those exhibiting serious academic, behavioral or attendance problems—those most likely to be among the negative statistics before year's end.

Every member of the faculty and staff agreed to participate in the program. They agreed to confer with parents on a regular basis about the child's progress. They provided help if necessary after reviewing report cards. They interceded with the student's teachers or administrators when he or she got into trouble. They worked through problems with the student in lieu of suspension. They also administered discipline when appropriate.

Faculty and staff also agreed to relate to students on a more personal basis. They promised to demonstrate genuine concern for each child and his or her problems. They remembered birthdays and Christmas with gifts. They even followed up on students after they left Woodson.

The adopting faculty or staff member sent a letter to the child's parent or guardian explaining the program and asking permission for their child to take part. The response was enthusiastic.

The program worked. Woodson Principal B. E. Lumzy reports that students who were adopted seemed eager to please and impress their adopters. Several who had appeared "hopeless" began to show remarkable improvement, both in their studies and in their behavior.

The best proof is in the statistics. Student suspensions dropped from 392 to 290 in the first year. Dropouts decreased from 76 to 52. And, the numbers have continued to drop.

Lumzy attributes the program's success to the fact that adopted students felt someone at school really cared about them. He said a side effect is the impact on teachers and counselors who had fewer time-consuming discipline conferences and student-teacher conflicts to mediate.

Advocacy from Listening

In other parts of the country, school administrators have shown their concern for students in other ways. Many cite "listening" as an administrator's most useful tool.

A former high school principal in Michigan, William C. Dean, now assistant commissioner of the Colorado State Department of Education, describes his experience with the "loudest, most vocal and even most violent student leaders."

Dean began listening to 20-25 of these students at a time from each grade level in his 1500-pupil Okemos High School. He soon learned that they were particularly upset by an archaic and unresponsive student government system.

"We had a very clumsy way of providing opportunities for kids to impact the system, address grievances or even vent what kids saw as their 'causes'. It contributed to sit-ins, lock-outs, marches, food riots and confrontations on a weekly basis," he said.

After several meetings with the students, Dean realized that a major concern was the lack of student representation at the decision-making level on matters that affected them daily. The

students also wanted a legitimate and formal grievance system for use when they felt a teacher or administrator had acted capriciously and arbitrarily.

A credit course, called Leadership Workshop, was developed to train students in governing themselves. The course was used to study alternative forms of student government.

Units on leadership training, parliamentary procedure and the structure and operation of the school district followed. These helped students learn to serve and represent others effectively.

Before too long, the class realized that an all-student council would be ineffective. Decisions would affect other people in the school in addition to students. Instead, they proposed an all-school council. They set about creating support for the council among faculty, staff, students, school board members and the community.

An elaborate system of committees provided opportunities for students and adults to work together on the resolution of issues such as human relations, communications, assemblies, social activities, grievances, curriculum, vandalism and student transportation. For every 10 students, one was actively involved in school governance.

Dean describes the project as a "once-in-a-lifetime" experience. "My relationship with those kids was so much more intense and real than anything I've done in my life. We lived a violent era together, shared its misery and its hurt. We tried together to make life a little better for us and others. It was a hellish, beautiful, scary, loving experience which I'm glad I had. Through it I grew in my knowledge of people."

Students on School Boards

Another means of involving students in decision-making is through school board representation.

Each of the four high schools in the ABC Unified School District in Cerritos, California, has an elected student representative to the local school board. One of the four becomes the student board member. The others sit close by during board meetings at a special staff table outfitted with nameplates and microphones. At each meeting, the governing board hears a 10-minute report by students from one district high school. The report highlights major student projects and concerns.

In addition, ABC Superintendent Eugene Tucker meets quarterly with the student representatives to explore ways of improving student input to the board and staff. He also holds two press conferences each year with the editorial staffs of student newspapers to focus on student issues. Students recently participated in a district review of all school board policies and provided ideas for revisions and additions.

In Wisconsin, Green Bay Superintendent Merrill Grant describes his district's Intra-City Council as a similar formalized way of involving students. Membership is composed of secondary school student council presidents who elect their own chair. This student also serves as a non-voting student school board representative. The Council has its own student newsletter as well as columns in some high school newspapers.

One of the Council's major accomplishments, according to Grant, is the establishment of annual school board forums in each high school. Board members visit the schools and hold question and answer sessions with students. Grant also visits classrooms for informal discussions with all seniors each year.

Someone Cares

Concern for students who are not attending school regularly can prompt pupil services administrators to become leading advocates for youth.

The "pushouts," dropouts, and suspended or expelled students of the Carrollton Farmers Branch Independent School District in Carrollton, Texas, have such a mentor. Director of Pupil Services Jack Millaway worried about the number of students under the compulsory attendance age who were being dropped from school rolls. Millaway obtained an opinion from the school attorney that such drops were illegal and immediately halted the practice.

But what were the school principals to do?

Attendance officers were hired to serve as social worker-counselors to get the non-attendees back to school. A Reassignment School was created to provide a program for students

subject to in-house suspensions. No longer could secondary schools put troublemakers out on the street. Instead, they sent them to the Reassignment School. And alternative classes were formed in each secondary school for potential dropouts.

Millaway believes that truancy patterns begin early. Clerical aides at each elementary school now call daily about every absentee student. Such attention makes parents and students aware that school attendance is considered important and someone cares whether children come to school each day.

Outside Resources

Many administrators are able to garner resources beyond school district personnel and tax dollars for advocacy purposes. Resources such as civic groups, service clubs, youth organizations and social

service agencies exist in all communities; often they are waiting to be tapped.

The Lee County School District in Ft. Myers, Florida, participated in an effort to coordinate many of these resources. A Child Advocacy Council, staffed by CETA workers, was established and incorporated as a non-profit organization. Its board of directors included representatives of the local school board, court system, mental health center and department of health.

In one of its first actions, 1200 Lee County seventh through twelfth graders (8.6 percent of the students in these grades) were randomly surveyed to determine gaps in county youth services. Using a 22-page survey developed by the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare's Office of Youth Development, the Council focused on how students viewed their needs. The survey also asked questions about career goals, community agencies and student values. It was printed at school district expense and administered on school time.

Council task forces were formed to deal with such issues as parent training, juvenile delinquency, child abuse and neglect, learning disabilities and exceptional children, and daycare.

The group devotes itself to community education, individual child advocacy, community action and coordinating services for the county's children. It has supported a variety of school proposals, including a program for expelled students aged 14 to 16, a mandatory health education curriculum, parenting courses for high school students, additional equipment for learning disabilities classes and an intern program for bright high school students.

An Unused House

Few administrators have the opportunity to muster community support the way Stuart Gothold did. Now chief deputy superintendent of Los Angeles County Schools, Gothold previously served as superintendent of the South Whittier, California, elementary district. One of the superintendent's fringe benefits was the use of a one and one-half bedroom house on the campus of a district elementary school.

Gothold's family included four children. They hardly fit into the small house which had been the district superintendent's residence for 30 years.

Seeking an alternative use for the house, and to avoid vandalism or worse, the new superintendent recognized the area's need for a boys' club. The predominantly minority community had few recreational or cultural facilities.

Gothold interested a volunteer cadre of residents to mount a fund raising campaign. Together they contacted local businesses and

industries, planned fund raising events and gained support for a clubhouse in the community.

Gothold especially remembers a very hot Saturday in the parking lot of a local drive-in movie. There he and several other "executive types" from the community commandeered a large flatbed truck from which they held a "swap meet" to raise money for the center. "You wouldn't have recognized any of us," he recalls, "but we had a good time."

The superintendent's new familiarity with the community prompted him to recognize the need for closer links between schools and South Whittier residents. Gang activity was on the increase, parent interest in the school was low, and because of the high concentration of non-English speaking families, school-home communication was ineffective.

South Whittier administrators developed a new position: school-community counselor. Funds for the position were obtained through federal desegregation monies and two counselors were hired.

"These people realized all of our dreams. This became one of the most gratifying accomplishments during my time as superintendent in the district," Gothold reports.

Know the System

An essential ingredient in advocacy is a familiarity with "the system" and an awareness of the means to tap its resources. Part of that bureaucratic "system" is the school district itself.

While a majority of Americans have gone through the public schools, a very small minority understand the school system and how it works.

The East Hartford, Connecticut Public Schools have published a booklet to help students and parents become their own advocates. The booklet is titled "They're Your Schools, How to Make Them Work for You."

Capsule one-paragraph descriptions tell the kinds of information that can be supplied by teachers, counselors, principals, secretaries and others. Telephone numbers are included. Similar information is provided about specific aspects of the curriculum and various administrative services.

The booklet urges readers to contact the superintendent if they feel policies are not being followed or that their complaint is not being handled properly by appropriate school personnel.

East Hartford Superintendent Eugene A. Diggs personally accepts the challenge to teach students to be their own advocates. Each year he meets with all ninth grade classes to discuss how the school system works and how students can make it work for

themselves. In addition, students receive a copy of the district's Student Rights and Responsibilities brochure.

Being an advocate for children isn't always easy—but it isn't necessarily hard either. As these examples illustrate, it means creating an environment where children and youth come first. It sometimes requires courage. It sometimes takes perseverance. It may require extra time. But, the testimonies of these school administrators indicate that the effort pays off in personal satisfaction and by creating a better world for young people.

CHAPTER FIVE

What Can You Do?

Serving as a child advocate requires a willingness and ability to relate to and with children and youth. It means making a conscious effort to keep the needs of children foremost at all times. It means making a commitment. Following are a few tips for school administrators:

- Strive to know better the children and youth of your community, their backgrounds, culture and values.
- Seek to overcome "childhood amnesia," the inability to recall your own view of the world from a child's perspective.
- Treat children and youth as human beings, as people.
- Provide them with every possible opportunity to develop their individuality, their uniqueness and to find dignity in who and what they are.
- Treat them as citizens. Don't join those who clamor for law and order for themselves but seek to deny it to children and youth; hypocrisy only widens the generation gap.
- Zealously guard their freedoms because in doing so you guard your own.
- Seek not everything they want, but seek for them everything they need.
- Hold them accountable for fulfilling their responsibilities, especially their responsibilities as citizens and learners.
- Help them develop the skills to cope with their environment and the skills to improve that environment when necessary.
- Help them become their own best and most responsible advocates.
- Expect a lot of them and you'll get it; don't and you won't.

The Administrator as Advocate

Once a commitment has been made, there are many specific activities that a school administrator can undertake to become involved in child advocacy. Following are a dozen examples of ways to become better champions of children and youth:

- Champion the cause of a single child or a specific group of children.
- Stimulate cooperative efforts throughout the community on behalf of children and youth.
- Champion teachers who care about children.
- Enhance the status of principals who strive to improve the quality of life at their schools.
- Champion the causes of children before local, state and federal lawmakers and public policymakers.
- Champion responsible but meaningful student self-government.
- Champion the no-shows, the dropouts and the pushouts, for they most need an advocate.
- For all children, champion not only competency in basic skills but the application of such skills to the real world.
- Champion education for responsible parenthood and family life.
- Champion the education of students for work and careers, not just jobs.
- Inspire your colleagues to become child advocates.
- Champion the cause of education generally, for it is today society's greatest advocate for children and youth.

Commission Recommendations

American Association of School Administrators

1. That the 1976 AASA Resolution, "Advocacy for Children and Youth" be given broad publicity during 1979, "the International Year of the Child."
2. That AASA design and implement a dissemination plan regarding this commission's report and recommendations.
3. That AASA take the initiative in convening the leaders of national agencies, organizations, and associations in a common declaration of commitment to the interests of children and youth.
4. That AASA, through appropriate mechanisms and structures, establish and maintain communication with other national agencies, departments and associations which share AASA's commitment to advocacy.
5. That AASA encourage state level associations to establish and maintain communications with state level agencies, departments and associations which share a commitment to advocacy.
6. That AASA encourage state level administrators organizations in cooperation with state agencies and other organizations to support the incorporation of children and youth impact statements into each piece of legislation.
7. That AASA encourage strong participation by its members on state level commissions for child and youth advocacy, and, in states where a commission does not exist, encourage the establishment of such a commission.
8. That AASA move beyond the work of this commission and probe the fundamental societal, political and economic transformations that are recurring which have implications for schooling.
9. That AASA support the legal and moral clarification of the right to an education.
10. That AASA take the initiative toward the re-establishment of a national educational policy commission.
11. That AASA establish as a continuing activity a commission on advocacy for children and youth. The commission should:
    A. Regularly monitor the continuing, changing and evolving needs of children and youth,
    B. Compile data and publish annually a status report on children and youth emphasizing benchmark information which will allow education leaders to determine where advocacy emphases are warranted.

C. Develop and disseminate a bibliography vital to advocates to facilitate the coordination of services to children and youth.

D. Convening, when necessary, meetings to advance the efforts of advocates to assure that children and youth's rights as human beings, citizens and learners are protected.

National Academy for School Executives

1. That NASE develop and offer a pattern of programming consistent with AASA's commitment to advocacy for children and youth.
2. That NASE join with other national agencies, departments, and/or associations in the presentation of instructional offerings attractive to all participating groups.

State Departments of Education

1. That State Departments of Education convene relevant state agencies to examine the role and responsibility of the state vis-a-vis children and youth.
2. That the State Departments of Education, consistent with their constitutional obligations, exhibit leadership on behalf of children and youth, emphasizing the severe needs extant in our society, and intensifying the commitment of the state to public education as the most salient approach to meeting those needs.
3. That State Departments of Education take the lead in observing the International Year of the Child.

Colleges and Universities

1. That Professors of Educational Administration examine their individual and collective responsibilities for child advocacy and the implications of those commitments for the preparation of educational leaders.
2. That Professors of Educational Administration take the lead in convening persons from such areas as Early Childhood Education, Social Work, Psychology, Manpower, Health Sciences and Law regarding their individual and shared responsibilities for the interests of children and youth with special emphasis on:
   A. The preparation of professionals
   B. Research
   C. Dissemination and sharing of findings
   D. Building institutional awareness.

Local Districts and Their Communities

1. That local superintendents convene, at the community level, the leaders of agencies, departments and associations which share a commitment to children.
2. That local superintendents take the initiative in observing the International Year of the Child.